

Co-chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Currey, Ranking Members Representative McCarty and Representative Berthel, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Cristher Estrada-Perez, and I am a resident of Hartford, Connecticut. I am testifying in support of S.B. 1095: An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

All students deserve to feel safe, secure and supported in their places of learning. Yet too often, our schools rely on policing to keep children in line, rather than funding professionals trained to deliver students necessary developmental and behavioral health resources.

I graduated from Weaver High School, a neighborhood school in Hartford, where Senator McCrory was my vice principal during my early years in the Law and Public Services Academy. It is an honor to provide written testimony before you, Senator McCrory as a former student who felt your positive impact on our school deeply. I am also the Executive Director of the Student Loan Fund, working for justice in higher education and student debt cancellation. I have a background in educational equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression education with educators and students in k-12 schools.

As a neighborhood school graduate and as someone who spent countless hours working with students, listening to and collecting their stories, I know students don't need SROs to feel safe. They have been clear that they need more counselors, therapists, restorative justice, and systems that support their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. As a graduate of a school with many SRO's I would have felt safer if we had more counselors, and more places to talk, to share experiences, and develop relationships. Students deserve that we cultivate those spaces for them.

ALL students deserve to feel safe, secure and supported in their places of learning. But Black and Brown's kids are more likely to be arrested or detained. According to research by [Connecticut Voices for Children](#), there's no evidence School Resource Officers (SROs) make students or staff safer, but schools with SROs have more arrests and more expulsions than their peer institutions without SROs.

I strongly support S.B. 1095. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote in favor of this bill. Together, we can build an educational system that centers the social-emotional well-being of students through care, resources, learning, and restoration.

Thank you for your time,

Cristher Estrada-Perez